

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 9938

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BR, US
SUBJECT: MAGALHAES PINTO EXPLAINS HIS CANDIDACY

REF: BRASILIA 7580

1. SUMMARY. SENATOR MAGALHAES PINTO CALLED ON AMBASSADOR ON NOVEMBER 25 TO EXPLAIN THE MOTIVES OF HIS SELF-PROCLAIMED PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY. HE SAID THAT ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN AND ROBERT PASTOR OF NSC STAFF HAD ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS MOTIVES AT THE RECEPTION AT THE RESIDENCE DURING THE SECRETARY'S VISIT ON NOVEMBER 22 AND THAT HE WANTED TO SEE THE AMBASSADOR TO RESPOND TO THEIR QUERY. IN FACT, HOWEVER, MAGALHAES PINTO HAD ASKED FOR AN APPOINTMENT SOME TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE SECRETARY'S VISIT AND HAD PLANNED HIS PRESENTATION FOR SOME TIME. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SENATOR SAID THAT HE BELIEVES HIS CANDIDACY TO BE HIS CIVIC DUTY, AS WELL AS HIS DUTY TO THE REVOLUTION. HE RECALLED THAT (AS GOVERNOR OF MINAS GERAIS) HE WAS THE CHIEF CIVILIAN ARCHITECT OF THE REVOLUTION, WHICH HE HELPED TO CONSTRUCT IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT A MORE SOUND POLITICAL SITUATION AND TO RETURN BRAZIL TO DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES ONCE THE NECESSARY CLEANSING OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM HAD TAKEN PLACE. IN SHORT, HE SAID, CONFIDENTIAL

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HE WAS FULFILLING HIS DUTY AS A BRAZILIAN, AS A POLITICAL FIGURE, AND AS A KEY FIGURE IN THE REVOLUTION.

3. MAGALHAES PINTO SAID THAT THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS DESIRE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY FOR RETURN TO A STATE OF LAW, ADDING THAT THIS FEELING MUST BE ACCOMMODATED LEST THERE BE A CIVIL WAR OR A COUP D'ETAT. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHAT HE WOULD DO IF THE PRESIDENT, IN AN

EFFORT TO GET HIM TO STAND DOWN, TOLD HIM THAT HE WOULD RETURN THE COUNTRY TO THE RULE OF LAW, THEREBY FULFILLING THE REASON FOR HIS CANDIDACY. MAGALHAES PINTO SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE PRESIDENT WOULD OR COULD MAKE SUCH AN OFFER AND INDICATED CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE PRESIDENT CAN BRING ABOUT A DEMOCRATIC OPENING. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED MAGALHAES PINTO WHAT HE WOULD DO IF THE PRESIDENT CALLED HIM IN AND SUGGESTED THAT THE VICE PRESIDENCY WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE, NOT NECESSARILY TO HIM, BUT TO SOMEONE OF HIS CONFIDENCE. MAGALHAES PINTO SAID THAT HE HAD NO INTEREST IN THE JOB, AND THAT HE FELT IT TO BE SO INCONSEQUENTIAL THAT IT WOULD NOT BE THE BASIS FOR AN ACCOMMODATION.

4. MAGALHAES PINTO INSISTED THAT HT INTENDS TO MAINTAIN HIS CANDIDACY THROUGH THE ARENA CONVENTION NEXT SEPTEMBER IN WHICH, HE STRESSED, THE VOTE WOULD BE SECRET. HE SAID THAT WHILE HIS CANDIDACY WAS OBVIOUSLY DISPLEASING TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE, NO ONE HAD YET CONTESTED IT. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT HIS CAMPAIGN WAS BEING INTERFERED WITH IN THAT SOME ARENA FIGURES WERE BEING WARNED AWAY FROM HIM, AND HE HINTED THAT EMPLOYEES OF STTE ENTERPRISES WOULD BE INVOKED AGAINST HIS CAMPAIGN.

5. THE AMBASSADOR REVIEWED THE PROCEDURE THAT WOULD TAKE PLACE NEXT YEAR, I.E., IF THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED HIS SUCCESSOR IN MARCH, THE OFFICIAL CANDIDATE AND MAGALHAES PINTO AS AN UNOFFICIAL CANDIDATE WOULD BOTH BE CAMPAIGNING AROUND THE COUNTRY. MAGALHAES PINTO REPEATED THAT HE WOULD GO TO THE CONVENTION. THE AMBASSADOR
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ASKED HIM WHAT WAS THE WORST THE GOVERNMENT COULD DO TO HIM, AS IT APPEARED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE INHIBITED IN WHAT IT COULD DO BECAUSE OF ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT HAD RECEIVED INTERNATIONAL BENEFITS FROM THE FACT THAT THERE IS A CIVILIAN CANDIDATE CAMPAIGNING AROUND BRAZIL. MAGALHAES PINTO DID NOT REALLY DEFINE WHAT HE FEARED THE WORST TO BE, BUT HE AGREED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PUT HEAVY PRESSURE ON ARENA CONGRESSMEN IN PREPARATION FOR THE CONVENTION. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHAT THEY COULD DO TO INTIMIDATE HIM. THE SENATOR SAID THAT HE HAD THE UNIVERSITY AND OTHER YOUTH OF THE COUNTRY WITH HIM AND THAT HE WAS "NOT INTIMIDATABLE." HE ALSO CLAIMED TO HAVE CONSIDERABLE SYMPATHY AMONG ARENA GENERALLY, ADDING THAT HE, IN TURN, HAD NO COMMITMENTS TO ANYONE.

6. MAGALHAES PINTO SAID THAT HE WAS DESCRIBED IN SOME CIRCLES AS THE CANDIDATE OF THE MULTINATIONALS AND OF PRESIDENT CARTER, AND THAT MOST RECENTLY HE HAD BEEN ACCUSED IN FLORIANOPOLIS OF BEING THE CANDIDATE OF BOTH PRESIDENT CARTER AND VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT PEREZ. HE SAID HE ALWAYS REPLIED TO THESE ACCUSATIONS WITH GOOD HUMOR.

7. COMMENT: THE SENATOR DID NOT ASK FOR ANYTHING, ALTHOUGH

THE INSISTENCE WITH WHICH HE HAD SOUGHT THE APPOINTMENT, AND HIS DESIRE TO SEE THE AMBASSADOR BEFORE THE LATTER LEFT FOR WASHINGTON, MAY INDICATE THAT MAGALHAES PINTO HAD BEEN WISHING FOR SOME FORM OF ENCOURAGEMENT. AT THE LEAST, IT IS REASONABLE TO BELIEVE THAT HE WANTED A STATEMENT OF HIS MOTIVES FOR HIS CANDIDACY ON RECORD WITH US. AS THE CONVERSTATION ENDED, THE AMBASSADOR TOLD THE SENATOR THAT HE ADMIRERD HIS COURAGE AND DEDICATION.

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